





AN
HISTORICAL SKETCH
OF THE
PINE CREEK CHURCH,
WITH A
BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE
OF THE LATE
REV. JOSEPH STOCKTON, A. M.

BY REV. TIMOTHY ALDEN,
S. S. OF THAT CHURCH.

PITTSBURGH;
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1839.

N. B. By a resolution of the Presbytery of Ohio, its members are required to prepare for a place, in their respective Session Books, such an historical account of their Churches, together with such notices of those, who have, at any time, officiated in the same, as may be useful in compiling a history of the Presbyterian Church. The following document has been prepared in conformity with that resolution.

SKETCH, &c.

From the best information, which the writer of this sketch has been able to obtain, it appears that the Pine Creek Church, in Indiana township, is indebted for its origin, under Providence, more to the exertions of William Davis Hawkins, Esq. than to those of any other individual.

This gentleman came with his family, in the autumn of 1801, from the vicinity of Baltimore in Maryland. In 1802, he became a resident at the place of the *blue house*, so called, built by the late Gen. John Wilkins, and, two years after, on a farm, now a part of the possessions of James Ross, Esq. located on the extensive bottom, which, in former times was claimed and occupied by *Gai-a Soot-her*, or as the name is pronounced by some, *Gai-a Sooth-ther*, a noted aboriginal warrior.

The inhabitants of this region, at that period, were few, and those, who remembered the Sabbath day to keep it holy, were still fewer in number. It is painful to add, the beasts of the forest had more to fear from the weapons-

of death, on that sacred day, than on any other day of the week.

Mr. Hawkins early made application to the Synod of Pittsburgh for ministerial supplies; but was referred to the Presbytery of Erie, which, then, embraced all that part of Western Pennsylvania, extending from the Alleghany river to the eastern boundary of the State of Ohio and, northerly, from Pittsburgh to Lake Erie. At length, he succeeded in securing the services of the Rev. Robert Patterson, a certain portion of his time, for the space of two years. The Rev. Abraham Boyd and the Rev. James Graham were the only Presbyterian ministers, who, so far as has been ascertained, ever occasionally officiated, in this destitute part of the country, previously to the engagement with Mr. Patterson.

The Rev. Joseph Stockton, having resigned his parochial charge at Meadville, became, in 1809, a citizen of Pittsburgh; and, on the suggestion of Mr. Patterson, succeeded him as a stated supply. At first, he preached to the little congregation, for several years, one-third, and, afterwards, one-half, of the time; his clerical services, for the residue, being devoted to the soldiers of the United States' garrison, in Lawrenceville, and to the gathering of a church in what is now the borough of Alleghany.

As no building for a place of public worship had been raised in the township, the convocation, on the Lord's day, was at the dwelling-house of Mr. Hawkins, for a considerable period, and, subsequently, at a tent in the woods, till the year, 1814, when a log edifice, of competent dimensions, was erected, in a commodious situation, on a lot of land, consisting of two acres and a half, procured, for the purpose from Mr. Kennedy, by the aid of his agent, on the western side of the Kittaning road, eight miles from Pittsburgh. In consequence of the increase of the population, the building was enlarged about the year, 1834.

In this temple, of humble materials and form, a goodly number of sons and daughters, by the instrumentality of Mr. Stockton, it is believed, was born into the kingdom of God. Here he laboured in word and doctrine to the close of his useful life, with encouraging success, faithfully dispensing the truths of the gospel, often visiting from house to house, imparting instruction to the domestic circle, endearing himself to his people of every grade, by his amiable deportment, familiar and interesting conversation, seasoned with an unction from the Holy One, and giving a stamp to the excellence of the Christian character by his exemplary conduct in all the relations of life.

Although the congregation was continually

increasing in number and interest, no church was formally organized till the year, 1815, when the Lord's Supper was administered, for the first time, and Messrs. William D. Hawkins, John Galbraith, and Matthew Crawford were ordained elders, and other appropriate arrangements were duly made. On this solemn occasion, very joyful to the friends of the Redeemer, the communicants, constituting the church, amounted to *seven only*; yet many brethren and sisters, from Pittsburgh and other places, united with the little band in commemorating the dying love of their blessed Saviour, for the first time, in a region, shortly before, a howling wilderness, and the abode of savage men. At the next communion season, in course of the following year, the members of the church had increased to about thirty in number. From year to year this church received additions from the world till, at the death of Mr. Stockton, one hundred and thirty six had been admitted, *of whom the greater part remain to this present, but some are fallen asleep.*

Mr. Galbraith, one of the first elders of this church, a worthy character, departed this life, on the twentieth of September, 1821, at the age of nearly seventy years. Mr. Crawford, on certain charges being exhibited against him, withdrew to another denomination. Messrs. Peter Miller, Alexander Patterson,

and David Stewart, having been duly elected, were ordained elders in the year, 1821. After three or four years, Mr. Stewart left the congregation; yet, afterwards, returned and was connected with the church, as a private member. At present, Messrs. Hawkins and Miller are the only elders of the Pine Creek Church, Mr. Patterson belonging to the newly organised Church of Sharpsburgh.

The Rev. Samuel Caldwell, now the pastor of the churches of Tarentum and Freeport, when a licentiate, officiated, one year, after the demise of Mr. Stockton, as a stated supply.

The Rev. James Campbell, who had been the stated supply of the Poke Run Church, connected with the Presbytery of Blairsville, in 1834, was installed the pastor of the Pine Creek Church, and officiated, from Sabbath to Sabbath, as Mr. Stockton had done, alternately, at the old meeting-house, on the hill, and at the new one, in Sharpsburgh.

At the meeting of the Presbytery of Ohio, in June, 1838, memorials from the Pine Creek Church were presented, both, from the people, who worship in the old Pine Creek meeting-house, and those who worship in Sharpsburgh, expressing their desire to be divided into two churches. After due consideration, the following resolutions were adopted, to wit;

"1. That the church at Pine Creek be, and the same is hereby divided into two churches—and that portion of said church, residing on the hill and worshiping there, shall be known by the name of the **PINE CREEK CHURCH**; and the portion of said church residing in and near Sharpsburgh, and worshiping there, shall be known by the name of the **SHARPSBURGH CHURCH**—and each portion shall continue to use and enjoy the house and ground, which they now respectively occupy.

"2. That the pastoral relation, heretofore existing between the Rev. James Campbell and that portion of the late church now set off on the hill, as the *Pine Creek Church*, be, and the same is, hereby, dissolved; and,

"3. That the pastoral relation, heretofore existing between the Rev. James Campbell and that portion of the late church now set off, in and near Sharpsburgh, as the *Sharpsburgh Church*, be continued, and he be directed to give the whole of his time, hereafter, to the Sharpsburgh Church—and proceed, as soon as possible, to complete the organization of said church."

At the meeting of the Presbytery of Ohio, in September following, it was resolved that the writer of this Historical Sketch be the stated supply of the Pine Creek Church, in which,

it may be added, he had officiated from the second Sabbath in July.

The old meeting-house being much out of repair, it was used, for the last time, on the Sabbath, the eighth of July, 1838. Directly after, it was taken down and a neat brick edifice, forty by thirty feet, was erected on the same site, and was so far finished as to be occupied, for the first time, on the Sabbath, the sixth day of January, 1839; on which occasion, in conformity with a resolution of the last General Assembly, the monthly concert of prayer was observed, for the first time in that place, when, with some subsequent additions, sixteen dollars and seventy five cents were collected for the Presbyterian Foreign Missionary Society. A Sabbath School was commenced, in July, which has been gradually increasing till eighty one learners, instructed by sixteen teachers, have been duly enrolled. The present number of communicants, attached to the Pine Creek Church, is seventy three.

Arrangements are in progress for entering in a book to be kept for that express purpose, a record of the names, ages, and times of the decease, of all buried in the cemetery, a decently enclosed lot of one acre, more or less, appertaining to the Pine Creek Church, near the eastern end of which lot stands the meeting house. Here will also be such occasional bio-

graphical notices, as it may seem proper to preserve. This is to be kept by some one of the Session, and, hereafter, as one after another descends into the grave, a registry of the same is to be fairly made, in the aggregate, constituting *the book* a body of records, convenient for reference, to which the relatives and friends of the dead may, in future, repair for a kind of information, no where else to be found, and calculated to afford gratification to many in ages to come.

In closing this sketch of the origin, rise, and progress of a church, which, for many years, was under the faithful care of one, who now rests from his labours, the fruit of which follows to the glory of divine grace, whose praise is in all our churches, and whose name is long to be had in grateful remembrance, the writer would fail to have accomplished the task, by Presbyterial direction, devolving upon him, should he neglect to attempt a brief biographical notice of a subject so worthy.

A mere outline of the principal incidents of his life, however, is all, that can be expected, as appropriate to the object of this communication; yet it may afford an acceptable reminiscence to surviving parishioners, relatives, and friends, to whom the name of Stockton is precious.

The Rev. Joseph Stockton was the youngest son of respectable parents in Franklin county, in the commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and was born in the neighbourhood of Chambersburgh, on the twenty-fifth day of February, 1779. His father was Robert Stockton and his mother, originally, Mary M'Kemy, the fruit of whose matrimonial alliance was eight children, to wit: 1. Thomas Stockton; 2. Margaret Stockton, the wife of the late Col. John Cotton, an elder of the church at Meadville; 3. Frances Stockton, the wife of Charles Stewart; 4. Col. Robert Stockton, an elder of the church at Meadville; 5. Jane Stockton, the wife of the late Rev. John Brice; 6. John Stockton; 7. Rev. Joseph Stockton; and 8. Elizabeth Stockton, the wife of the Rev. James Cunningham, of the State of Ohio.

In 1784, the family left his native place for a settlement, on a farm, in the vicinity of Washing'on, the seat of justice for the county of that name, in the western part of Pennsylvania. Having received his classical education at Jefferson College, in Canonsburgh, and having attended to a course of Theological studies, under the direction of the late venerable John M'Millan, D. D. the patriarch of the west, he became a licentiate, on the 24th of June, 1799. On the eighth of May, 1800, he was united in marriage to Esther Clark, a

daughter of David Clark, Esq. near his family residence, and, in the fall of the same year, he became an inhabitant, with his bosom companion, of Meadville in Crawford county, which was the first settlement formed in Pennsylvania, north of Pittsburgh and west of the Alleghany river and Kon-ne-wong-go creek, and was begun by the late Gen. David Mead, in 1787. On the 23d of June, 1801, he was ordained and installed the first pastor of the Presbyterian church in Meadville.

During the nine years he resided in this village he had the charge of the Meadville Academy, which still continues a useful institution, together with the Presbyterian congregations of Meadville and Konneyaut lake.

In 1809, Mr. Stockton was elected Principal of the Pittsburgh Academy, which was subsequently merged in the Western University of Pennsylvania. He persevered with great acceptance, in the discharge of the laborious duties of that seminary, till the year, 1820. In the meantime, he published the *Western Spelling Book* and the *Western Calculator*, both of which have been extensively used throughout the western parts of the American Union. It may be proper here to remark that the latter portion of his life was diligently occupied on a certain theological work, which it is to be re-

gretted that he had not been spared to finish for publication.

It has already been stated that his ministerial services were devoted, from his first establishment in Pittsburgh, to the soldiers of the garrison, two miles from the city, to the building up of a church in Alleghany, and to the supplying of the infant congregation in the neighbourhood of Pine Creek. His time, Sabbath after Sabbath, was in this manner occupied till 1820, from which period, until 1829, his ministry was confined equally to the Alleghany and Pine Creek congregations. During the last three years of his life, his ministerial labours were wholly given to the Pine Creek Congregation. In this period, the village of Sharpsburgh took its rise within the limits of his charge, and, promising to become populous, a neat brick meeting-house was erected, in which he officiated, for the better accommodation of his people, on every alternate Sabbath. The number of communicants received into the church, under the ministrations of Mr. Stockton, amounted, as before mentioned, to one hundred and thirty-six.

Having performed the part assigned him, by the great Head of the Church, for establishing the Pine Creek Presbyterian Congregation, and for carrying on the work of the gospel ministry in the same, to the edification of

saints and the conversion of sinners, till a church was duly organized and advanced to a prosperous condition, he was suddenly released from all the cares of life.

While on a visit at Baltimore, whither he had been hastily called to attend on a son dangerously sick with a fever, he was attacked with the cholera, that alarming scourge, which, travelling from the south of Asia through Europe into North America, then, for the first time, swept through the United States, carrying terror and dismay into almost every portion of our country. After an illness, attended with extreme suffering, of twenty four hours' continuance, on the 29th day of October, 1832, he sweetly fell asleep in Jesus, entering upon that rest, which remaineth sure to the people of God.

In the all-wise but mysterious providence of God, he was summoned into the world of spirits from a place and at a time, little expected; yet, when led to realize that the period of his departure was at hand, he was calm and resigned. Having requested that the fifteenth chapter of John might be read, a part of the long address, full of consolation and instruction, delivered by our blessed Saviour to his disciples, while on their way to the garden of Gethsemane, and the Rev. Mr. Davis coming in, directly after, by his request, to pray

with him, Mr. Stockton said to him, *the battle is nearly fought*—and will you gain the victory? said Mr. Davis—*yes*, he replied, *I feel that I shall—I feel that Christ is with me.* He frequently expressed a longing desire for *the closing conflict—that the time might speedily come, when he should see his Jesus face to face*—and frequently prayed, *come, Lord Jesus, come quickly—thy servant waits.* He desired a gentleman, who kindly attended him, to convey *his love to his wife and children—and an affectionate remembrance to his congregation and all his friends*—and, shortly after, he left this world of sin and sorrow for a mansion of holiness and joy in the heaven of heavens.

His widow, four sons, and three daughters still survive, whom God long preserve to imitate the lovely character—the amiable example—the ardent piety—of him, whom they can never cease to remember with affection, gratitude, and respect.

His remains were deposited in the burial yard of the first Presbyterian church, Baltimore, near its centre, over which is erected a monumental stone with the following inscription.

SACRED

TO THE MEMORY OF

THE REV. JOSEPH STOCKTON, A. M.

Of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania,

Who died in this city, 29th October, 1832,

IN THE FIFTY-FOURTH YEAR OF HIS AGE.

“Yet in my flesh shall I see God.”



